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## Navy Nurse Corps Scientist Reflects During Nurses Week

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**By Capt. Jacqueline Rychnovsky, U.S. Navy, Nurse Corps, PhD, RN, CPNP, commanding officer, Naval Health Research Center**



As a little girl, science was my favorite subject. My mom always said my constant questioning made me "nosy," but I remind her that I'm just curious.

Fast forward years later, and my curiosity helped lead me into a career in [Navy Medicine](#) as a Navy Nurse Corps officer and scientific researcher. In light of the [Navy Nurse Corps' 106 birthday celebration May 13](#), I'd like to share how the nearly 4,000 Navy nurses are "doing a world of good" not only in the medical field, but in the field of scientific research. We are integrated throughout Navy Medicine worldwide whether caring for patients in need in dynamic, challenging and exciting environments or performing scientific research that serves as the building blocks for medicine around the world.

As a nurse researcher and the first [Navy Nurse](#) Corps officer to command a Navy Research and Development command, it's not unusual for people to ask how nursing research differs from other medical or scientific research. The question never offends me but always causes me to give pause. The question is asked in the civilian and academic community too, mainly by those wondering how nursing research differs from quality improvement studies, or how nursing research and evidence-based nursing practice inquiries or projects differ.

In general, nursing research is a rigorous scientific process that provides knowledge to influence or shape health policy, prevent disease or disability, and build a scientific foundation for clinical nursing practice. The process focuses on understanding and easing the

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unpleasantness of disease symptoms and finding solutions to achieve and sustain health. This differs from evidence-based practice, which is the use of best evidence to make decisions about patient care or quality improvement, which is a continuous process used to strengthen health care outcomes.

Ideally, instead of focusing on how nursing research is different from “regular” research, I would rather talk about how they are the same. Whether research performed at the bench, on human subjects, or through systematic reviews, the end result is the same. I would argue that we are all attempting to improve care, reduce suffering, and impact quality of life. Our tools are diverse: microscopes, stethoscopes, questionnaires, lasers, medication, observation, computer software, even conversation! We document, discover, interpret and develop concepts, thoughts and ideas to advance knowledge.

I believe that we get the most “bang for one’s buck” if studies are multidisciplinary and approach a patient-focused problem through the eyes of the individual. We need to actually feel and understand what real people go through to truly understand their experience. This is why we at Naval Health Research Center are excited to be submitting our first TriService Nursing Research Program grant to evaluate gender differences in experiences of military sexual assault victims. If funded, we propose to use a variety of research methods to describe differences and patterns in male and female experiences, figure out better ways to ask questions to help victims describe their sexual assault, and find out what helps victims cope and move on. We’ve built a team of nurses, doctors, and research psychologists from the Army, Navy and Air Force to make sure we will fully understand what happens and how it makes the person feel. Team diversity equals meaningful outcomes in my book.

I am appreciative for the confidence that Navy Medicine leadership has shown in me and am grateful each day to have the opportunity to get paid to do what I enjoy most. After all, curiosity is a good trait for all researchers!

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